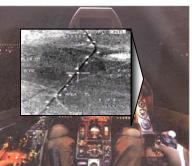SUCCESS STORY

Air Force A-10Cs Deploy with Situation Awareness System
from 1996 Combat Identification ACTD

Many ACTDs demonstrate technologies that later get more uses than first planned. Such is the case with the 1996 Combat Identification ACTD. It demonstrated technologies that identify U.S. forces in the battlespace, helping to reduce fratricides. One technology was a Situation Awareness Data Link (SADL), which connects pilots to a network and downloads friendly ground and air units onto displays in the cockpit. This information helps pilots decide whether or not to engage ground targets. After the ACTD, the system was installed on close air support-designated F-16 aircraft in the Air National Guard and Air Force reserve. Since 9-11, these data link-equipped aircraft have been used in defense of the U.S.

A-10s get Situation Awareness Data Link with cockpit display showing ground situation

Recently, the SADL was installed in A-10C aircraft. As intended, it identifies friendly ground units — a big improvement for the aircraft. Before, pilots received friendly unit locations and target data via radio and then plotted it on paper maps to better understand the ground situation. Now, the system's displays give pilots an overview of the battlespace. The system also provides a secure exchange of text messaging and digital imagery between ground units and the aircraft. In addition, the pilot using the SADL can electronically connect all aircraft sensors to the target and transmit that information to the other A-10Cs. Ultimately, this system shortens the 'kill chain,' enabling faster and more effective close-air support. A-10Cs equipped with the SADL have provided air support in Afghanistan and Iraq. (See www.acc.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123087237&page=3)

For more information on the AC/JCTD program, visit its website at www.acq.osd.mil/jctd/ .